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CALIFORNIA VOTERS SEE EMERGING SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS AS VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM; BELIEVE STATE SHOULD TAKE ACTION

Oakland, CA -- California registered voters regard the emerging shortage of K-12 teachers as a very serious problem and think that the state should be taking decisive action to rectify the situation, according to a poll released today by EdSource and the Learning Policy Institute.

The survey was conducted by The Field Poll following recent reports showing that the number of new teaching credentials issued in California has declined steadily for more than a decade, along with even more precipitous reductions in enrollments in teacher preparation programs enrollments.

The poll found that statewide, 64 percent of voters describe the shrinking supply of teachers as “very serious,” and a similar proportion (65 percent) think it’s “extremely important” for the state to be doing more to encourage young people and others to enroll in teacher preparation programs.

The survey of 1,002 registered voters statewide—including both English and Spanish speakers—found there is broad-based voter support (85 percent) for having the state forgive a portion of teachers’ college loans or offer more scholarships to prospective teachers as a way to bring greater numbers into the teaching profession.

By contrast, more than half (52 percent) oppose policies that would allow schools to hire individuals who have not yet completed their training or earned a teaching credential as a way to deal with teacher shortages.

The release of the poll findings coincide with a media briefing on November 17 at 11:00 a.m. to discuss the findings as well as strategies to address the diminishing numbers of Californians entering the teaching profession.

Participants in the briefing include Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute; Louis Freedberg, executive director of EdSource; Joe Aguerrebere, CSU assistant vice chancellor of Teacher Education and Public School Programs; Eric Heins, president, CTA; Harold Levine, dean, UC Davis School of Education, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson; and Mark DiCamillo, director of The Field Poll.

“Californians clearly want the state to take action to attract, train and retain a talented teaching pool for our schools,” said Louis Freedberg, executive director of EdSource. “We know that for students to achieve, we need to ensure a strong supply of effective, well-trained teachers; and in California, we are coming up short.”

“At a time when California is implementing new standards, it’s important that all students have access to teachers who are well-prepared in those subject areas,” said Linda Darling Hammond, president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute. “A teacher shortage will set back the state’s education agenda.”

Californians are quite supportive of ensuring that teachers are well-trained and supported prior to entering the profession. More than 9-in-10 say the state should ensure all teachers receive rigorous preparation before they begin teaching, and a similar number (88 percent) believe this should include a year of practice teaching under the guidance of an expert teacher.

Ninety percent also believe new teachers should receive mentoring and support in the early years of practice, and ongoing professional development after they receive their teaching credentials.

Californians are also concerned about teacher salaries. Fifty-eight percent think the starting salary for qualified K-12 teachers in their own communities is too low, while only 21 percent believe it is too high or about right. A 51 percent majority also say it is extremely important for the salaries of entry-level teachers to be commensurate with what other recent college graduates are paid, while another 37 percent say this is somewhat important.

At the same time, 7-in-10 voters would be very or somewhat likely to encourage a friend or family member to become a teacher, though voters under the age of 30 are less apt to say they would be very likely to do so.

Other findings from the survey include the following:

- More than three-quarters (77 percent) believe it’s important (46 percent extremely important and 31 percent somewhat important) for the state’s teaching force to be racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse.
- Sixty-one percent support a ballot proposition expected in November 2016 that would require schools to offer academic instruction in both English and their native language to students not proficient in English.
- Two-in-three Californians believe the fact that public schools in low-income communities have fewer qualified teachers than schools in wealthier communities is a “very serious” problem.
- Democrats, women, and Latino, Asian American and African American voters are most likely to be concerned about the state’s teacher shortage and are more supportive than other groups of having the state take action.

- Nearly 3-in-4 Democrats (73 percent) believe the teacher shortage is a “very serious” problem versus 48 percent of Republicans. Sixty-eight percent of women describe the shortage as “very serious” compared with 60 percent of men.
- In addition, 76 percent of Democrats and 70 percent of women say it is extremely important for the state to do more to encourage young people to enroll in teacher preparation programs, compared with 49 percent of Republicans and 59 percent of men.
- There are also substantial differences among voters depending on their race and ethnicity.
 - About 8-in-10 African Americans (82 percent), 7-in-10 Latinos (72 percent) and a similar number of Asian American (68 percent) believe the teacher shortage is a “very serious” problem, compared with nearly 6-in-10 (57 percent) of white non-Hispanics.
 - Similarly, 8-in-10 African Americans, more than 7-in-10 Latinos (74 percent) and 7-in-10 Asian Americans think it is “extremely important” for the state to do more to encourage young people to enroll in teacher preparation programs compared with fewer than 6-in-10 (58 percent) white non-Hispanics.

The poll was conducted with support, in part, from the [Walter and Elise Haas Fund](#).

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Note: The attached Chart Pack provides a graphical summary and shows how the results compare across subgroups of the state’s registered voter population.

About The Survey

The findings in this report are based on a survey completed from September 17 to October 4, 2015 by The Field Poll. The survey was commissioned by two California-based education policy research organizations, EdSource and the Learning Policy Institute.

Interviewing was completed among a random sample of 1,002 registered voters by telephone using live interviewers. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter from the state's registered voter rolls on different days and times of day during the interviewing period.

Interviewing was completed on either a voter's cell phone or a landline phone, depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. After the completion of interviewing, the overall registered voter sample was weighted to demographic, geographic and party registration characteristics of the state's registered voter population.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error for results from the overall sample is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the response distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50 percent). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10 percent or 90 percent) have a smaller margin of error. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other possible errors.

EdSource is an independent, impartial, non-profit organization established in 1977 to engage Californians on key education challenges and to highlight strategies that promote student success. The Learning Policy Institute is a new research and policy think tank that aims to use rigorous research to develop and advance education policy solutions.

Questions Asked

The following questions are about K-12 schools, and specifically about the declining number of qualified new teachers who are available to teach in the state's public schools. According to recent estimates, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined by more than half over the past decade, and many of the state's public schools are now facing teacher shortages, especially in fields like math, science, special education and bilingual education.

1. How serious of a problem do you think the shortage of public school teachers is in California – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?
2. How important do you think it is for the state to do more to encourage young people and others to enroll in teacher preparation programs to become teachers in the state's K-12 public schools – extremely important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?
3. To deal with its shortage of teachers, one approach is to allow schools to hire individuals who have not yet completed their training or earned a teaching credential. Do you favor this approach strongly, favor it somewhat, oppose it somewhat or oppose it strongly?
4. There is a proposal in the Legislature to try to increase the number of prospective teachers in the state by forgiving a portion of their college loans or offering them scholarships if they agree to teach for at least four years

in low-income communities or in subjects where there is a shortage. Do you favor this proposal strongly, favor it somewhat, oppose it somewhat or oppose it strongly?

5. How serious of a problem do you think it is that public schools in low-income communities have fewer fully qualified teachers than do public schools in wealthier areas – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?
6. How important do you feel it is for the state’s teaching force to be racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse – extremely important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?
7. In your opinion, do you think that the starting salary for qualified K-12 teachers in your local community is too low, about right or too high?
8. How important is it that school districts offer starting salaries to entry-level teachers that are comparable to the salaries being offered to other new college graduates – extremely important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?
9. There are a number of things that state government could do to ensure that there are more high-quality teachers in the K-12 schools. I am going to read some proposals that have been made, and for each please tell me how important you feel it is for the state to do this. (ITEMS READ IN RANDOM ORDER.) (Ensure that all teachers receive rigorous training and preparation before they begin teaching.) (Provide opportunities for prospective teachers to receive a full year of practice teaching under the guidance of an expert teacher.) (Require that all teachers receive ongoing professional development and training after they receive their teaching credentials.) (Ensure mentoring and support for recently hired teachers so they don’t leave teaching within a few years.) How important is it for the state to do this – extremely important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important?
10. How likely would you be to encourage a friend or family member to become a K-12 teacher in California today – very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely or not at all likely?
11. A proposition that will appear on the November 2016 statewide election ballot would require public schools to offer students who are not proficient in English academic instruction in both English and the student’s native language. It would also require the schools to offer English-speaking students more opportunities to master other non-English languages. If the election were being held today, would you be inclined to vote YES or NO on this statewide ballot proposition?